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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [RW](#)  
SUBJECT: RWANDA - EVIDENCE OF NKUNDA RECRUITING FROM  
REFUGEE CAMPS?

Classified By: CDA Cheryl J. Sim for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) CDA Sim received an internal UNHCR Kigali report July 30 detailing efforts by associates of renegade General Laurent Nkunda to recruit combatants from Congolese refugee camps in Rwanda. The report (text below), which does not identify sources of information at Gihembe refugee camp, indicates Nkunda is making plans for a September attack on Goma, and that Mrs. Nkunda supposedly visited Gihembe camp to recruit fighters for her husband, accompanied by a "heavy Congolese and Rwandan escort." In Post's opinion, parts of the report appear inconsistent and not particularly credible as to Mrs. Nkunda's supposed visit, motivations and exhortations to the refugees. Regardless of the credibility of these aspects of the report, UNHCR officials believe that some refugees are selling food rations to provide funding for Nkunda and other food is reportedly going over the border to support his force. UNHCR officials say they are trying to impress upon the Government of Rwanda (GOR) the need to prepare for the large influx of Congolese refugees into Rwanda that would result from such an attack on Goma. However, the GOR remains woefully underprepared.

¶2. (C) Given the sensitive nature of the report and UNHCR's interest in protecting its source, a UNHCR Kigali senior representative traveled to Kampala to transmit the notes below and other related information to Geneva.

¶3. (C) Begin text one:

"Note for the File

On Friday, 18 July 2008, BOK received the following information Gihembe camp:

Between 6 and 13 July 2008, a delegation of Congolese women belonging to the group of Laurent Nkunda came to Gihembe Camp to prepare the visit of Ms. Nkunda and to sensitize the refugee population on the recruitment of combatants. Ms. Nkunda arrived in Byumba town on 12 July 2008 at 23:00. On 13 July, she went to the camp and had a meeting with the Refugee Committee and the refugees, among which were the young refugees. She left the camp on 14 July 08 at 3:00 am. The choice of arriving and leaving late Rwanda was due to the fact that she was accompanied by a heavy Congolese and Rwandan escort.

During her visit to Gihembe Camp, two items on the agenda were discussed: the recruitment of combatants and the planned re-opening of the Field Office in Byumba.

Concerning the recruitment, Ms. Nkunda reiterated and urged the young refugees to abandon their studies in favor of the fight. She informed the refugees that Laurent Nkunda is preparing to attack Goma this coming September 2008. Once Goma is seized and after three or four days of organization, they will organize the forced repatriation of Congolese refugees from the camps in Rwanda.

As for the expected re-opening of UNHCR Office in Byumba, Ms. Nkunda reportedly requested that refugees should resist the re-opening as this will disturb their activities in the sense that they will not be able to come freely in the camps, especially during the weekends.

We were also informed that a refugee of 30 yrs old approached UNHCR Gihembe to report that he was recruited sometime back to fight in DRC. He reported that the current President of the Refugee Committee also was there to receive the military training. The refugee stated that he is currently harassed by the President of the Refugee Committee to go back to DRC for the fighting.

UNHCR staff also reported that the current Refugee Committee is currently interviewing all refugees who were ex-combatants, or who received a military training while they were in DRC. All these refugees are being watched by the Refugee Committee which was elected on 13 March 2008. For what purpose these interviews are being done, UNHCR did not receive any information.

It is worth mentioning that during the SPO Mission to Kibuye (16 July 2008), UNHCR Office reported that one refugee has briefly approached the Office to talk about the recruitment of his son. He was afraid of doing so. Therefore, the Office is planning to interview him outside Kiziba camp.

It is without any doubt, that recruitment activities are being done in the camps (Gihembe and Kiziba). These visits are timed/planned, and always coincide with the school holidays. Some parents in Kiziba camp advised their children not to come to the camp during the holidays. Given the sensitivity of the issue, refugees are afraid to talk and UNHCR should find ways to encourage them to report such issues. UNHCR should increase its presence in the camps, despite of the current low level of protection staff.

UNHCR Rwanda.  
20 July 2008."

End text one.

14. (C) Begin text two:

"Note for the File

I was informed this morning (24 July 2008) that following Ms. Nkunda visit in Gihembe camp, some Congolese refugee women (number not known) went to DRC to undergo a training. The women came back and started a sensitization campaign while raising 300 Rwandan francs per family/household.

Another information which I received is that Innocent from CNR (Rwandan National Refugee Commission) has called for a meeting tomorrow (25 July 2008) with all MINALOC (Ministry of Local Government) Camp Managers, Presidents and Vice-Presidents of Refugee Committees. UNHCR was not invited and the purpose of the meeting is not known to UNHCR.

I am trying to call (named person) to find out what this meeting is about but to no avail.

Protection Section  
BOK, 24 July 2008"

End text two.

15. (C) Comment. It is difficult to gauge the credibility of

this information in the above texts, which appear to have been written by someone who is not fluent in English. There is no question that recruitment efforts occur in the camps, particularly after hours and on weekends when camp staff are absent. What is not clear is the degree of GOR complicity. We note that where the UNHCR report has Mrs. Nkunda calling for recruits, she states the refugees in the Rwandan camps (the mothers, fathers and other family members of the recruits) will then be "forced" to return -- to what would be a wildly insecure homecoming. It is difficult to believe that any Nkunda operative, including his wife, would offer such a discomfoting prospect to camp recruits. Given Nkunda's previous defeat at the hands of MONUC in a failed attack on Goma, talk of a September attack may be more recruiting rhetoric than actual strategy. It also hard to believe that the GOR would expose its hand (if it is complicit in recruiting) by so openly supporting a recruiting drive by the highest profile recruiter one could imagine visiting the camps -- the wife of General Nkunda. As this Mission has argued previously, the GOR sees its future in peaceful and cooperative regional relations, not in waging small battles for low stakes in the endless internecine conflicts of the eastern Congo. End comment.

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